

VZCZCXRO9099
RR RUEHGR
DE RUEHPO #0191 0901751
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 311751Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8201
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO 0999
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 1990
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 1530
RUEABND/DEA SAN JUAN PR
RUEAWJB/DOJ WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

UNCLAS PARAMARIBO 000191

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR LLUFTIG, INL/LP NBOZZOLO, KBROWN
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NS](#)

SUBJECT: ATTORNEY GENERAL PRAISES DEA ASSISTANCE, CALLS FOR
CLOSER COOPERATION WITH GUYANA

REF: PARAMARIBO 187

¶1. (U) Summary. In recent public statements, Attorney General Subhas Punwasi reiterated his commitment to combating narcotics, praised cooperation between the Government of Suriname (GOS) and DEA, and expressed a desire to increase law enforcement ties with Guyana to stem the increasing quantity of drugs crossing the border. End Summary.

¶2. (U) At a March 28 workshop on developing a drug supply data network, Punwasi publicly described Suriname as a transit point for local and transnational criminals transshipping drugs and weapons. He said the importation of drugs, mainly cocaine, occurs mainly via private planes of foreign drug organizations landing on illegal airstrips in the interior and coastal zones. He mentioned strong suspicions that cocaine is being dropped in the sea just off Suriname's coastline to be fished out by speedboats. Punwasi continued that drugs are exported through Suriname's only international airport as well as by means of sea vessels leaving primarily from Suriname's main port along the Suriname River. He said drugs are hidden in secret compartments welded shut underneath boats and among

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export products such as rice and wood blocks.

¶3. (U) Punwasi stated that Suriname is committed to battling the drug trade and that international cooperation is essential for success. He praised the close cooperation between Surinamese police and DEA, which he said has led to increased drug seizures, a significant number of arrests and the dismantling of criminal organizations. He also said that he welcomed the permanent establishment of DEA in Suriname. In a separate media interview, Punwasi stated that as a result of DEA cooperation, there has been a recent significant reduction in cocaine drops/landings in Suriname.

¶4. (U) This decrease in landings has been accompanied by an increase in cocaine being smuggled into Suriname from Guyana, according to Punwasi. Drops are made in Guyana, broken up into smaller parcels, and then smuggled over Suriname's western border, the Corantijn river. Over the last several months, Surinamese law enforcement has interdicted an increasing number of drug shipments in

western Suriname, particularly the district of Nickerie. To combat this trend, Punwasi called for closer cooperation between Guyanese and Surinamese law enforcement officials. He also stated that Suriname is not only worried about the drugs situation, but other criminal matters as well.

¶5. (U) Punwasi claimed that the GOS has dismantled eight of ten drug trafficking organizations in Suriname with a ninth, extremely large organization on the verge of being dismantled. However, he acknowledged that Suriname lacks the necessary material resources, such as off-road vehicles, fast riverine boats, and helicopters, needed to arrive quickly to locations in the interior or along the coast to interdict cocaine drops or landings.

COMMENT

¶6. (SBU) Notwithstanding the current uncertainty surrounding the permanent establishment of a DEA presence at the Embassy (See reftel), Punwasi's remarks reinforced the long-standing commitment by GOS law enforcement officials to cooperate closely with the USG on tackling the drugs problem in Suriname. The trend of smaller cocaine parcels entering Suriname from Guyana squares with information received from various Embassy law enforcement contacts recently. According to the contacts, Guyana has become more attractive for drug landings than Suriname because of a lesser amount of law enforcement scrutiny there and greater accessibility of aviation fuel.

¶7. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

BARNES